

THE GALE
OF
OPPORTUNITY.
OR,

A SERMON Preached (at *Lidbury-North*) at the Funerall of the Worshipfull
HUMPHRET WALCOT, of Walcot, Esq;
JUNE 8th. 1650.

And now Published, by *Thomas Froyssell*, Minister of the
GOSPEL at *Clunne* in *Shrop-shire*.

As we have therefore opportunity, let us doe good unto all men, especially to them that are of the Household of Faith, Gal. 6. 10.

Exhort one another daily, [while it is called to day, lest any of you bee hardened through the deceitfulnesse of sin, Heb. 3. 13.

Filij hominum usquequo gravi corde? ut quid diligitis vanitatem et quæritis Mendacium? Tempus hoc animabus non corporibus enim assignatum, dies salutis utique non voluptatis. Omnia tempus habent: Animabus nunc operam dare necesse est; nam in carne qui seminat, solum exinde metet corruptionem. St. Bernard in declamat.

L O N D O N,

Printed by M. S. and are to be sold by H. B. at the Signe of the
Castle in *Corne-bill*.

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To the truly vertuous and his much Honored, Mistris *Anne Walcot* of *Walcot*.

 I was your Husbands desire (when alive) that I should preach His Funerall, and 'tis yours, that I should Print it; Else (for ought I know) it had never seen the light: For I count not any of my

Grapes worth the Presse: Therefore since it is your pleasure to see this Sermon in a Printed dresse, I pray accept of it.

When your deare Husband was alive, Yee were Two precious Diamonds set in the Ring of Marriage; God hath taken him away to shine in another World, and hath left you to shine a while in this world; *It is but a while*, and therefore spread forth all your beams, before you set in the West of Death, and be seen here no more.

If we would shine with God in Heaven, we must shine for God on Earth: Let this Sermon of opportunities make you improve your opportunities: Shall the men of this world hugg their opportunities for the world, and shall not we Husband our opportunities for Heaven?

Society with *Jesus Christ* even on this side Heaven, is a kinde of Heaven; and those Christall streams of Joys which we might suck from God here, outid all the pleasures and braveries of this world; which made *Bonaventure* (when the Devil tempting him, told him, he was a Reprobate, and therefore perswaded him to drinke in the present pleasures of this life, for (saith he) Thou art excluded from the future joyes with God in Heaven) Answer, No, not so, Satan, If I must not enjoy God after this life, yet let me enjoy him as much as I can in this life: Oh that drooping Soules would thus quench Satans suggestions! This were enough to rebound all his temptations back againe upon him. *Fruition of God a far off in this life (though we should never enjoy him in the next) is much better, then all the pleasures of the world below him:* Ah! What then will our fruition of him in Heaven be? Joy in him here, and you shall enjoy him hereafter: Live to him here, and you shall live with him hereafter: And to this end God gives you all your opportunities, to this high and happy end, that you may attaine him. That himsele, and all that he

*Si Non datur
frui Deo et
virtute post
hanc vitam,
fruemur eo in
presenti.*

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is worth may be yours: And let me tel you, 1 That a Sermon of opportunities is almost as necessary to be preached, as to preach Christ himselfe: because the opportunity to receive Christ is (in its kinde) as necessary as Christ to be received: as Christ is called *Salvation*; so our opportunity is called the *Day of Salvation*: *Behold now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of Salvation*. We loose Salvation it selfe, if we loose the day of Salvation; we loose Christ himselfe, if we let passe the day of Christ, *If thou hadst knowne, in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes*. A man that is to have a summe of money tendred him upon such a day, must be sure to watch and wait the day, if he would receive the money: He that hath a suite at Law, must observe the Terme-time; if he loose the Terme he will loose his suite: as *Luther* said, that *Much of Religion consists in Adverbs*: so say I, That much weight of our Salvation lyeth in circumstances, in the circumstance of time and opportunity: As the whole weight of our Salvation is laid upon Christ, so the whole weight of our getting Salvation is layd upon our time, our opportunity: 2 Let Faith give you a presentiality of things to come, of Death to come, of your Account to come: Faith gives them a present Existence: set the Period of your Time neer unto you, behold it is at hand, when you shall live no longer, pray no longer, have the helpe of Ordinances no longer; We know not how few sands are left in our Glasse of opportunity, and when they are once spent, God will not turne the Glasse againe for us: 'Tis this that affects the heart: 'Twas this that awaked *Niniveh* to repentance: *Yet forty dayes, and Niniveh shall be destroyed*: How did this Alarum stirre their Hearts! what (say they) but forty dayes? Are our dayes shut up into so narrow a roome? What are Forty dayes? How soon will they see an end? This frightened them into a fit of Repentance: It is time for us (say they) to fast and pray, and rise out of sin, if our Sun be so neer setting: I am perswaded if God had sent *Jonah* with this message, *Yet forty years and Niniveh shall be destroyed*, it had made no worke at all upon them: it might have amazed them, but not started them up to such a present repentance: It is the neer approach of our end that drives the worke home in us: Tell a Scornor in his ruffe and jollity, that he must dye one day; He receives it carelesly, and makes nothing of it: but tell him, yet forty dayes,

2 Cor. 2. 6.
Luke 19. 42.

DEDICATORY.

dayes, and you must be called to judgement, Nay Sir, but two or three dayes hence, and dye you must; This goes to the quick, at this news the proud Ruffler is sodainly dismounted, and his courage degraded, he looses his blood in his cheeks, and shivers at the heart, like the leaves of the Forrest that are shaken with the winde: Ah then, see death upon us: Look upon our end as standing by us; as neer as are the shadow and the substance, so neer are Life and Death; our life is but the shadow, death brings substance with it, substantiall woes, or substantiall joyes in the bosome of it.

Cato Had oftentimes spoken in the Senate, that the City *Carthage* must be destroyed, being too neer a neighbour to the City of *Rome*: For a long time together he formed no *Oration* in the Senate, but he usherd in that still as the conclusion: yet he could not carry it, because *Scipio Nasica* being made up of a contrary opinion, alwayes pleaded on the other side, that it was for the good of the *Romane Common-wealth* that *Carthage* should stand: At last, Cato on a day brought a green Fig into the Senate among them, and told them, that this Fig was growing in *Carthage* but three dayes agoe: and thereby warned them that a Navy might within three dayes arrive from *Carthage*, and lay siege to their City: When they heard this, The neernesse of the danger, made such impression on their thoughts, that whereas before they could never be won upon to assent, now they voted not to give over till they levelld *Carthage* to the ground: And shall not eternity affect us? the neernesse of it write deep Characters of feare and care upon our hearts? Within three dayes, and death may lay siege to our City, to our Soul: beware of evill at hand, of death at hand, of Judgement at hand. Thou Fool (saith Christ) *This night thy Soule shall be required of thee*: ah then let us Act betimes, let not the night take us in a night, let not the night of Death take us in a night of sin and security, then we shall have a double night at once upon us.

3 Opportunities are very precious: Every one according to the objects they lay out for, value their opportunities: ther's no Prince or great person in the world, hath more Clients and attendants, then opportunity hath: All sorts Court her, and wait with humblest service on her; The Husbandman waits opportunity to plow, and sow, and reap: The Tradesman

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man attends opportunity to make his bargains at lowest rate, and sell off his wares at highest price : The Ambitious man stands at the door of opportunity to raise himselfe : All (but fools) according to their occasions runne out to meet, and bow the knee to opportunity, and shall not the *dearest* opportunities be precious to us? Shall we not take the *best* opportunity by the hand? Opportunity to gaine the most precious things is the most precious opportunity; opportunity to get the best treasures is the best opportunity: *Godlinesse is great gaine*. Heaven is the highest advancement, The Soule is the Crowne and Master-piece of man, surely then the opportunity to get and save these should be counted precious opportunity : All things here (that are of the world) are but nothings, but Idols and shadows of the best things (*and an Idol is nothing;*) Time is but the Idol of Eternity, and things Temporall, but the Idol of things Eternall : Our estate and our dayes here are but an Idol : Ther's no divinity nor immortality in them : but God is an absolute and eternall Being, the spring of all Divine satisfactions, They that live in him, live at an high rate, and live for ever : How can he complaine to want light, that lives in the midst of the Sun? How can he complaine of Thirst, out of *whose belly flow rivers of living water*? Surely then opportunity to enjoy God, is the most precious opportunity.

1 Cor. 8. 4.
Tempus & al-
la idola.

John 7. 38.

Your Importunity hath fetcht out this Sermon of Opportunity from me : and I have given you here more then I preach't, the time being too narrow to deliver all at once, and therefore I was faine to omit many things in the Pulpit, which I had in my papers : The Spirit of the Lord Preach it all over againe to our hearts : I commend you to the Lord,

Who am

Yours most deeply obliged to

Honour and Serve you,

Tho. Froyssell.

Clunne Octob.

8. 1651.

To his highly HONORED,
Mr. *John Walcott*,
of WALCOT.
Esquire.



I R, In publishing this Sermon (Preached at your Fathers
Funerall) I could not but publish your Name to it, or it to
your Name, you beeing so neer to him, for Every Child
is the Father multiplied : He loved you dearly, for
his (and your owne) sake, I cannot but love and honour you highly.

This Sermon was Preached for him, but it was Preached to you ;
and therefore God looks that it should worke upon you : For at that
time you had two Preachers at once Preaching to you, the Preacher
in the Coffin, and the Preacher in the Pulpit : He preach't to you
that you must dye, This Sermon preach't to you how you must live :
His Death preach't to you, that time will be gone ; This Sermon
Preacheth to you, how you should improve your time : As Death is
the way to eternall life, so an holy life is the way to an hap-
py death : Your Good Father dyed old, and you may dye young :
as God writes some mens life in words at length, so sometimes God is
pleased to write in short-hand, and cut a long life into a small Monosyl-
lable : and therefore turne and winde your present stock of time to the
best, and grow rich in grace upon it. Remember

1 You cannot begin too soon to serve Jesus Christ : One may begin
too late, but he can never begin too soon to serve Jesus Christ : Where
should the Flower of your Age grow but in the Garden of his service ?
It is the Policy of the Devill to discourage Early holinesse : He that
goes out betimes in the morning, is more like to dispatch his Journey,
than he that lingers till the day be spent.

Bp. Hall.

An EPISTLE.

^a Religio non potest habere excessum secundum quantitatem absolutam, potest tamen habere excessum secundum quantitatem proportionis, prout scilicet in cultu divino fit aliquid quod fieri non debet. Aquis. 222. q. 92. a 1. ad. 3.

Sus non potest ferre, rosas & amaracum. Franz. & Plin. Rom. 12. 11. Iracundi sunt qui amant. Lucian. in dial. Merc. & Maij Finis appetitio non habet limites definiti. Aristot. Finis praescribit media, sed ipsi fini non praescribitur. Eccl. 7. 29. Gen. 1. 26.

2 You can never doe too much for Jesus Christ: Religion knowes no ^aexcesse: you cannot savour too much of holinesse: as there be some persons that cannot beare the smell of Muske and sweet perfumes, it fills their brains and makes them sick, so Hypocrites, (and they are Hypocrites that) cannot abide the smell of holy precisenesse, and the sent of stricthnesse: Paul bids us be fervent in spirit [*ῥοις*, that is, seething hot] serving the Lord: Qui non zelat, non amat, He that hath not zeale for Christ, hath not love to Christ: True zeale is a Seal of our Election: Stricthnesse and exactnesse is the beauty and lustre of Religion: I say, you cannot doe too much for Jesus Christ, he hath done so much for us: And what doth Christ require of you, but he did the same for you? Is hee not upon equall termes with you? Nay before hand with you? If he calls you to bear the Crosse for him, did he not bear a greater Crosse for you? Grace puts no limits to Holinesse: He that makes God his End, thinks he can never have enough of God, or be too holy for God: And though his actions of Holinesse, and his forwardnesse in them over-run his Credit, or over-throw his Estate, yet he cares not, repents not; for 'tis not his End to preserve himselfe, but to serve Jesus Christ upon himselfe.

3 Holinesse is no upstart: Under which notion the world looks upon it: as if precisenesse in Religion were a new fashion taken up, and put on by some but of late: No; Holinesse was the first Suite that ever was put upon the back of mans nature: 'Tis elder then Sin: 'Tis the first borne: God made man Righteous: 'Tis more naturall to man to be righteous; Sin is against nature: 'Tis a defect of nature: It came (as I may say) of the wrong side of the Hedge, a meer Bastard: God is not the Parent of it, it hath nothing of God in it, 'twas the Devil that begat it upon mans nature, and therefore 'tis of a later Edition then grace, Grace was, when sin was not: Let us make man (saith God) in our Image, after our likenesse: You see Grace is of a most ancient house, of the highest antiquity, and therefore if any thing will, it will ennoble you.

4 And that you may be beated into zeale for Jesus Christ, Live in the Scripture fire: as the Salamander (they say) lives in the fire, so doo you live in the Scripture, as your Element: It will scorch you into en holy love to Jesus Christ: No book becomes your hand like the Bible: It made David wiser then his Teachers: 'Tis this Book that makes Preachers, and this Booke is the best Preacher: This Booke will preach to you in your Chamber: By this Booke all Preachers and Hearers must be judged at the last day: This Booke will expound

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to you that hidden Booke that is within you, your Conscience: The Booke of Conscience is a secret and intricate piece, very few are well read in it, most deceived by it; but this Booke of Scripture I say, this Booke will discover it, and shew you all the Errata in it; it will search your very heart, and tell all its secrets to you, nay this Booke will tell out Gods heart to you, and his minde concerning you, (cc) Luther hated his owne Bookes, and (saith hee) I often with they were all lost, fearing least they should hold Readers in delay, and take them off from reading Scripture.

Ierome gives a strange narrative of himselfe, how he was dragged to the Tribunall, because he had read Cicero more greedily then he did the Scripture; Being asked of my condition, (saith he) I answered, I was a Christian: Thou lyeest (saith the Judge) Ciceronianus es, non Christianus: Thou art a Ciceronian, not a Christian; for where thy Treasure is, ther's thy heart also. Presently (saith he) I was put to silence, and had not a word to say: and among the stripes (for he had commanded me to be beaten) I was scorched more with the fire of Conscience, considering with my self that Verse, In the Grave who will give thee thanks? Then I began to cry, Have mercy upon me, O Lord, have mercy upon me: This voice sounded loud amidst the scourgings: At last, they that stood by, casting themselves downe at the Presidents knees, prayed him, that he would pardon my youth, and give place of Repentance to my Errour: Then he requiring punishment, if at any time I read beathen Books, I, who in such a case would have promised greater matters, began to sweare deeply, saying, Lord, If at any time I should read those secular Books I have denyed thee: And so upon this Oath he was dismissed: And he addes moreover, Neither was this a sleep or a vaine dreame, with which we are often deluded, Witnesse that Tribunall before which I lay; witnesse that severe judgement which I trembled at, that I pray God I never fall again into such examination by torment: I confesse I had my shoulders black and blew, and felt the blowes after my sleep, and have since read Gods word with such endeavour, as I never read before any humane writings: Thus far Saint Ierome: Now let this passage awake you, and all of us: Let us lay aside the sublimest curiosities of mans witt, all Volumes for Scripture, And all imployments for Heaven.

Wing your haste, you have the flourishing plumes of Age upon you, How farre might you fly and soar up quite to an heaven of experience, and communion with Jesus Christ, if you would loose no time: I say,

(cc) Ego odi libros meos, & saepe opto eos interire, quod metuo ne mortentur lectores, & abducant a lectione ipsius Scripturae, quae sola omnis sapientiae fons est, &c.

Psalm. 6.

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if you would loose no time : I hope you will not, I pray you may not: For you may see in this Sermon, That opportunity is an unvaluable Treasure, and yet a transient Treasure ; it carrieth lasting things along with it, and yet it selfe lasts not, staves not with us : You may see in this Sermon, what great things you may loose, if you loose your opportunity ; you may loose your selfe if you loose your opportunitie.

God hath set you upon the higher ground, above many in the world, Act highly for him : Lay up a Rich stock of Grace within you, that you may have an heart to act for him in publick : I wish you prosperity here, felicity hereafter : Accept this Dedication from him, who doth, and shall ever rest,

Your real Servant in

CHRIST JESUS.

THO. FROYSEL.

CLUN. Octob.

8. 1651.

JOHN XII. VIII.

For the Poore alwayes yee have with you, but me yee have not alwayes.



Me-thinks I see a sad concourse of people before me this day ; and truly who can be here and not bee sad ? A great man and a good man is fallen this day : He lived amiable, and dyed desirable ; I am perswaded, you could all finde in your hearts to wish him into life againe, but that you are loath to displease God ; Wee must submit and kisse the hand of providence in the death of our dearest Friends and Saints : We are now to performe our last office to him, wee have brought him from his house to his house, I meane his grave, which must house him up till the great day of the Resurrection.

Eccles. 12. 5

You see what Death doth, it plucks up the tree by the roots. the Cedar as well as the *Shrub* : To day we are green, within a little while we are not seen : Stay but a few dayes, and such a day as this will be thy day : And therefore that we may make a serious and spirituall use of this occasion, turne your eye and cast your thoughts upon the words of my Text.

For the poore ye have alwayes with you, but me yee have not alwayes.

These words are the words of our Lord and Saviour *Jesus Christ*, and they are an Apology or Defence which he makes for a poor Saint, who having done a good worke (an act of love to *Jesus Christ*) was censured for it.

1 The worke which was done, you shall see in the third ver. Then tooke Mary a pound of ointment, of *Spikenard*, very costly, and annointed the feet of *Jesus*, And wiped his feet with her hair, and the House was filled with the odour of the ointment : Observe,

b/servation.

1 The dear Saints are full of love to *Jesus Christ*:

2 Love will spare no cost: the Saints will spend the Spike-nard of their credit, and the oyle of their life upon *Jesus Christ*: where we dearly love Christ, nothing is too dear for him.

2 You shall finde this worke of love ecclipsed, and censured in th^{4th}. ver. Then saith one of his Disciples, *Judas Iscariot, Simons Son* which should betray him, *Why was not this sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poore?*

b/servation.

There is no action so good, but some or other will be quarrelling with it, and finde some fault in it: The best actions are capable of censure and disallowance: The noblest actions may have a scarre of reproach and censure put upon them:

And this he said (saith the 6. verse) *not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a Thiefe, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.*

b/servation.

Avarice wants not beautifull pretences: Hypocrites carry foul sins under a fair vail.

3 Now follows Christs Apology and Defence of her, v. 7. Then said *Jesus*, *Let her alone*

b/servation.

Jesus Christ will take his Saints part and plead their cause against the wicked.

libil nocet ca-

miniator, si te

tua opera pro-

Deus. Ferus.

The Lord *Christ* pleads and justifies her action by two arguments.

1 The one Argument, from the end of the action; *The honour of Jesus Christ*, ver. 7. [*Against the day of my burying hath she kept this*] That is, yee doe willingly allow sweet balmes and rich perfumes for the dead: Now I am within a little of death; Behold this woman hath herein reached beyond your conceit, she hath done this (as her last office) toward my buriall: I hope you will afford me those solemnities of honour which are given to others at their buriall; now, against the day of my Buriall hath she kept this.

asens. pro fu-

ro, ut infra.

h. 16. 10.

at. 28. 20.

2 The other Argument of defence he takes from the opportunity of it; she hath now an opportunity to shew me kindnesse, which within a little while will be taken from her [*For the poor alwayes you have with you, but me yee have not alwayes*] and therefore let her shew me kindnesse while she may: Yee have not me alwayes with you: that is, yee shall not have me alwayes with you: Indeed, *I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world,*

world, in respect of my divine presence, but me yee have not alwayes with you, in respect of my humane presence. Six dayes hence I dye, and goe to Heaven, I goe quite away from you, and you shall neither see me, nor have me againe among you to performe any such offices of respect to me, and therefore as for this action, she doth well to take the opportunity, which will be taken from her. Observe, and 'tis the point I shall discourse of at this time;

There is an opportunity for good, which if we neglect, we may never have the like againe.

And therefore Marke rendreth it thus, for you have the poore with you alwayes, and whensoever you will you may doe them good, [i. e. at any time] but me (saith Christ) yee have not alwayes. That is, you shall never want the opportunity of shewing kindnesse to the poor, for yee shall never want poor among you; the poor that want, you shall not want among you, they shall always dwell among you, some poor or other as objects of your Charity: but you cannot always performe service to me in my body, for you shall not have mee always in this visible forme and presence with you. And therefore be not angry with this woman, in that whilst I am present in body, shee hath done this service to my body; The houre is comming you shall wish to doe the like, but cannot; The opportunity will be gone, when I am gone, ye shall desire to see one of the dayes of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it: And therefore I say,

There is an opportunity of good, which if we neglect we may never have the like againe.

Time and opportunity differ: Time is the duration or succession of hours; days, or years, opportunity is a concurrence of all other helps with time to crowne your desires, and give birth to your designs: opportunity is a meeting of time and means together to effect the end, when time and the means are married and lodged together they beget opportunity.

As the Marriner that intends a voyage, Riggs his Ship, lyeth ready in the Haven, and waits the winde, his time is all the time he staves there: His opportunity is when time, and tide, and winde, and all other accommodations meet together to send him away.

If you would speak with a man upon such a day, your time is any hour in the day, but your opportunity to speak with him

The Doctrine.

Mark 14. 7.

Luke 17. 22.

Docemur hoc verbo, ut non cessemus bene operari, quando-cumq; et quam-diu occasionem habemus, non enim semper id poterimus. Ferus in Loc.

What oportu-nity is, *Occasionem pars Temporis, habens in se(a) alicuius rei idoneam faciendi aut non faciendi opportunitatem. Cicero lib. 1. de invent.*

*ἡρότος, ἱμ-
pus, spatium
temporis in ge-
nere : καὶ ὅτε
vero opportuni-
tas Rei geren-
da, quam Te-
rentius articu-
lum vocat Pa-
for. in ἡρότος.
Isai. 55. 6.*

him is, when he is at home, and can be at leisure, and will as-
ford you his company : When all these claspe together, that's
your opportunity : So suppose thy businesse be to speake with
God, and seek him for grace or comfort, thy time to speake
with God is all thy life time, but thy opportunity to speake with
God is, when he is at home, and can be found ; when he gives
thee a heart to speak to him, and hath a heart to speak with thee,
and therefore saith the Prophet, *Seek yee the Lord while he may
be found, call yee upon him while he is neer* : when all these are
twisted together, that's the thread of thine opportunity.

Time without opportunity is like a body without the Soule,
a dead thing and meer inanimate carcasse, and as the body is
left without the Soul, so is time many times left without her
opportunity.

So that time may stay, when opportunity is lost : time may
be present when opportunity is past : the tree of time may
stand when the leaves of opportunity are dropt of : The stump
of time may stick fast in the root, when the branches of oppor-
tunity are cut down : the head of time may stand, when the gol-
den haire of opportunity are fallen off : when opportunitie
is gone, the head of time is bald.

And therefore I say, that there is an opportunity for good,
which if we neglect, we may never have the like againe.

And this I will shew you in two things.

1 There is an opportunity of receiving good, which if we
neglect, we may never have the like againe.

2 There is an opportunity of doing good, which if we neg-
lect, we may never have the like againe ;

There is an opportunity to get, and an opportunity to act ; an
opportunity to lay up, and an opportunity to lay out spiritual
treasures, which if we neglect we may never have the like again.

1 I say there is an opportunity of receiving good, which if
we neglect, may be we shall never have the like againe.

1. Sometimes there is an opportunity to beget faith in us,
which if we neglect we may never have the like againe ; as you
may see in *Esai. And the Lord spake againe unto Abaz, saying, Ask thee
a signe of the Lord thy God, aske it either in the depth beneath, or in the
height above : But Abaz said, I will not aske, neither will I tempt
the Lord. Ask a Signe, where thou wilt, where thou thinkest
it may be the greatest miracle, and give thee the greatest satis-
faction*

*Esai. 7. 10, 11,
12.]*

*καὶ ὅτε ἡρότος
Χροῦ.*

faction, either in the depth, or in the height, on earth, or in heaven.

Ah what an opportunity had *Abaz* here offered to inspire him with faith! A miracle where he would, and what he would; for the Prophet ^(a) prescribes not what signe *Abaz* ^{(a) Ratio signi autem (quod certe magnum enim) Regi A-chas relinquitur libera, quam velit esse & habere, sive in supremis, siue in infernis.} should ask, lest haply the truth of the miracle might be suspected; but leaves it to the Kings owne option and free choice, whether he will have it towards the depth or height, in earth or heaven, if earth were too low for a miracle, to heighthen his faith, he should have one as high as heaven.

Ah sweet opportunity! ah strong opportunity to worke such a faith in *Abaz*, as to trust God for ever! here was an opportunity for him to try God, to put the word of God to an experience; and ah! what scope had he? Aske a *Signe in earth or Heaven*, where thou wilt, and what thou wilt, I will not grudge it, any thing to mount thy faith beyond the Region of feare and doubting; to make thee and my people *Israel* beleieve in me, thy faith shall want for nothing to support it; God gave him leave to be his owne Carver.

As when a great friend comes to your house, you entertain him in this Language, Sir, command all that's here, aske what you'l have, 'tis yours: So did God be speak *Abaz*, all that's in heaven or earth is, for this minute, at thy service, the choicest miracle that heaven or earth can yeeld to banquet thy faith, command it, 'tis thine: what a rich table of opportunity did God spread for him? What variety of dishes [a sign from Heaven or earth] did the Lord set before him, to entertaine and feast his faith? Thus doth God condescend to sinners; when they will not come up to him, he comes downe to them: This was kindnes enough to strike the fire of Faith out of the hardest flint: Ah what an opportunity was here lost! and once lost, 'twas lost for ever: we read not that the like was ever offered *Abaz* any more, but he grew worse: when men despise Gods opportunities, they grow worse and worse.

So againe, you have another sad instance in the second of *Kings*; where *Elisba* prophesied in a time of scarcity, Thus saith ^{2 Kin. 7.1.2.} the Lord, to morrow about this time shall a measure of fine flowre be sold for a *Shekel*, and two measures of barley for a *shekel* in the gate of *Samaria*; then a Lord on whose hand the King leaned, answered the man of God, and said, Behold, If the Lord would make windows in heaven,

Verf. 17.

heaven, might this thing be? and he said, Behold Thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof: And see this verified. And the King gave the Lord, on whose hand he leaned, the charge of the gate, and the people trod upon him in the gate, and he dyed as the man of God had sayd. He seeth the plenty for conviction of his unbelief, but he dyeth and tastes it not, as a punishment of his unbelief.

Mat. 26. 21.
23, 24.

2. Sometimes an opportunity of repentance, and so of receiving pardon, is given to a man, which if he neglect, he may never have the like againe: Such an opportunity Judas had: Judas had conceived a plot in the wombe of his intention to betray Jesus Christ, and form'd it up into a conspiracy with the Pharisees to deliver him to them, yet Jesus Christ gives him an opportunity once more to repent and recall himselfe before it be too late; Verily I say unto you, one of you shall betray me, He that dipeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me. The Son of man goeth, as it is written, but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed, it had been good for that man if he had not been borne.

Ah Judas! What a thunder-clap is here sent from heaven to awake thee? what a warning-piece goeth off to scare thy soule out of sin? 'Twas a providence thou shouldst sit at table once more with Christ, to heare something fall from his lipps that might melt thy heart; Ah, what an opportunity hadst thou now put into thine hand, to repent, and retract thy purpose? for the Lord Jesus doth discover his sin, and doth dissuade him from his sin.

1 He doth discover the Sin,
But not the person, yet.

I say, He doth discover the sin [*one of you shall betray me*] the Lord Jesus discovers the sin that he might recover the sinner, He shewed him his sin, that he might not sin, he shewed him his sin before hand, that he might not sin underhand: he did strike the sin that he might open a veine of confession in Judas, and make him bleed kindly: Ah what an opportunity was here for Judas to confesse and be forgiven?

2 But he doth not discover the person yet: he doth not name him that he might not shame him: he opens the sin but not the person, that he might thaw him and not harden him: that he might winne him, but not irritate and provoke him: Jesus is yet

yet tender of his credit, how much more of his Soul : what an heavenly dew of opportunity drops it self upon *Judas* to moisten his heart ?

In like manner, what an opportunity hast thou (O Sinner) to repent when God shall reprove thy secret Adulteries, and unjust dealings, and hypocrisie in a Sermon, and not discover yet ?

2 He doth dissuade him from his sin by two arguments.

By Love, and Terrour ;

1 By Love, *He that dipperth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me* : which words were not spoken to discover *Judas* by this signe, but to aggravate his sin ; as if he should say, my fellow-commoner, one of my familiar friends, that eats of the same dish with me, shall betray me.

And here Christ endeavours to melt the heart of *Judas*, and cause him to forbear, by an argument fetcht from all the kindnesse and intimacy that had been so long between them : what, my friend ? my familiar ? who doth not onely sit at the same Table with me, but eat of the same dish with me, will he betray me ? will that hand that hath been with me in the same dish, dip and dye it selfe into a Crimson colour in my blood ? he dissuades him by love, by the law of love and friendship.

2 He dissuades him by Terror : *The Son of man goes as it is written of him, but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed, it had been good for that man if he had not been born* : where observe,

Mat. 26. 24.

1 The Lord *Jesus Christ* bewayles not himself, but *Judas*, even whilst he threatens *Judas*, he pities *Judas* : woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed.

2 He doth not yet unmaske and disclose *Judas* : he carries the person yet in the clouds, he doth not as yet say in individuo, Woe to thee O *Judas* ; but speaks still in the general, Woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed : the individual discovery of *Judas* comes in afterwards, and here *Jesus Christ* does with this threatening way-lay *Judas*, to make him retreat, (b) seeking his salvation, *It had been good for that man if he had not been borne* : as if he had said, if nothing else yet will, if nothing that hath been said yet can recall the Traytor from his purpose of sinning, yet let this one thing bespeak him, and turne his heart quite about, his owne safety, his owne fearfull condition which will follow upon his sin, let that put a stop to his

(b) *Pena pre-dicitur, ut quem pudor non vice-rat, corrigan denuntiata supplicia.* Hieronim in cap. 26. Mat.

progress: *Woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed, it had been good for that man if he had not been borne.*

Here the door of opportunity stood open to *Judas*, and *Jesus Christ* stood in the door to invite *Judas*, but he had not an heart to goe in, and the opportunity was presently shut against him, and he never had the like againe: he goes away, and becomes his own Executioner; *Judas* betrayes *Christ*, and after betrayes himselfe, when *Christ* called him, he would not repent kindly, and now he meets with an unkind repentance that Swallows him up in the gulph of despaire.

3 A man may have an opportunity given him to save his life, and so by consequent to save his soule, which if he neglects he may never have the like againe. I will give you two sad instances, the one is *Lots* children in *Sodome*; Then the men said unto *Lot*, whom hast thou yet here, either Son in Law, or thy sons or thy daughters, or whatsoever thou hast in the City, bring it out of this place for we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is great before the Lord, and the Lord hath sent us to destroy it.

Note,

The Saints are so neer to God, that he will save those that are neer to them, for their sakes; God would be a friend to *Lots* friends, a father to his children. And *Lot* went out and spake unto his sons in law which married his daughters, and said, Up, get yee out of this place, for the Lord will destroy this City: Behold, here's their opportunity! an opportunity to save their lives from fire and brimstone, and for ought I know, their soules from the fire of hell; O golden opportunity! for a mans life is his Treasure, an opportunity to save ones life is the life of all opportunities, and therefore poore *Lot* goeth to them, Grace doth not extinguish nature: he flyeth upon wings of love to them, and tels them, he warnes them like a Prophet, and bespeaks them like a Father: but what say they? he seemed as one that mocked to his sons in Law; and so he leaves them, for his time was short, and now their opportunity is gone, and they are gone too: Farewell now, you are all dead men and women: God first raines downe the golden drops of opportunity upon them to save their lives, which they neglect, and presently he raines downe shewres of fire and brimstone on them, and takes away their lives.

1. Kings 22. 4,
5, 7, 8, 17. &
28.

Another instance is *Abah* in the first of the Kings, *Wilt thou goe with me to battel to Ramoth Gilead?* and *Jehoshaphat* said to the King

King of Israel, I am as thou art, my people as thy people, my horses as thy horses, and Jehoshaphat said unto the King of Israel, enquire I pray thee at the word of the Lord to day, And Jehoshaphat said, is there not here a Prophet of the Lord besides, that we might enquire of him? And the King of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, There is yet one man Michaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may enquire of the Lord, but I hate him, for he doth not prophesie good concerning me, but evill: And Jehoshaphat said, Let not the King say so. And he said, I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills as sheep that have not a Sheapheard, and the Lord said these have no Master, let them returne every man to his house in peace: And Michaiah said, if thou returne at all in peace, the Lord hath not spoken by me.

Here was his opportunity to save his life: but goe he will, his opportunity expires, and his life too, for he never returnes alive againe, for a certaine man drew a Bow at a venture, and smote the King of Israel between the joynts of the harnessse, wherefore he said unto the driver of his Chariot, Turne thine hand and carry me out of the Host, for I am wounded.

Verse 34.

[A certaine man drew a bow at a venture] the man shot the Arrow, but God aimed it: the man shot at a venture, but God levelled it at Ahab: the man shot at he knew not who, but Ahab in the whole Army was Gods marks-man; Carry me away saith Ahab out of the Host for I am wounded: Oh Ahab; What thinkest thou now of Gods opportunities! What saist thou now of Micaihas words? I am wounded; saith Ahab, I beleve thee, and the losse of thine opportunity wounds thee more; ther's death wounds in thy Soule, as well as in thy body.

4 When an hypocrite will not obey Gods expresse command, he may lose his heart, and his restraining grace for ever after; when a man loves a sin better then Gods command, God leaves him to his sin: When a man gives up himselfe to a lust, God finds a time to give him up also, and sets him a going faster: he opens the fluces, and puls downe the bankes, that the mans lust may run in a full stream, and have nothing to check it.

Sinner! God will one time or other try thee secretly, with a casting command, a command that shall have the casting voice, and ther's thine opportunity to make or marr thy selfe for ever.

The Glasse of Balaams story will shew you the face of this truth

Num. 22. 12.

truth in it, when King Balak sent for Balaam to curse the people Israel, God denies him leave to goe, he sets his command before him, *Thou shalt not goe with them, thou shalt not curse the people, for they are blessed* : Here's Balaams opportunity : the command is set before him to try him, and Balaam stands now upon the turning point, But what's the issue ? When the Messengers came again, Balaam solicits God againe for leave to goe, Balack promises him transcendent and high rewards, and they seal a deep impression upon the soft wax of his covetous heart, he is upon the wing to be gone, and what then ? God now in judgement gives him leave to goe ; *God came unto Balaam at night, and said unto him, If the men come to call thee, rise up and goe with them.*

Vers 20.

But how can these stand together ? in the 12 verse God said unto Balaam, *Thou shalt not goe with them* ; But in the 20. Verse, *If the men come to call thee, rise up and goe with them* ; Why did God bid him what before he did forbid him ? At the first time, when he told him, *Thou shalt not goe with them*, God shewed him the will of his approbation, but when at the second time God said to him, *Rise up, and goe with them*, 'twas a command with indignation.

Some things God permits with indignation, not for that he gives leave to the act, but that he gives a man over to his sin in the act : This sufferance implyes not favour, but judgement ; God never liked Balaams Journey, he displeasedly gives way to it.

And now Balaam's thine opportunity is lost, and thou a lost man : God will now give thee up to thine owne heart ; Balaam after this grows worse and worse ; his heart is given up and hardned, 'tis steeped in sottishnesse, for an Angel stops him with a drawn sword in the way, yet he hath a minde to goe, his Asse doth by miracle speak, and yet he hath a minde to goe, ah Balaam ! wher's thine understanding ? I see now thou art a gone man, for thine Asse is wiser then his Rider, the Asse becomes rationall, Balaam becomes brutish, when men repell Gods opportunities they become more brutish then the beasts.

5 A man may by one short act of sin bring a long curse upon himselfe and his posterity : As Ham when he saw his Father Noah drunke, and uncovered in his Tent, Ah what an opportunity

tunity lost he now? had he veiled his fathers nakedness, and throwne a cloud over it, he had received a blessing: but he goeth and proclaimes it to his brethren, and they doe what he should have done; they covered their Fathers nakedness, and would not turn their eyes to see it. *And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him, and he said, Cursed is Canaan, a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. Canaan was Hams son, Noah* (^c as Gods mouth) prophesieth a curse upon the son, for the fathers sin; although some thinke (^d) that *Canaan* first saw *Noah* naked, and deriding him alone, called his father to bear him company in that contempt; Here *Ham* is cursed in his son *Canaan*, and a curse entailed not onely to *Canaan*, but to his posterity. *Noah* prophesies a long series, and chaine of curses upon *Canaan* and his children: he makes the curse hereditary to the name and nation of the *Canaanites*, עֶבֶר עֶבֶר *A servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren*; that is, the vilest servant: for the *Hebrews* expresse the superlative degree by such a duplication, as [vanity of vanities] that is, most vaine, a [song of songs] a most excellent song: So here, *A servant of servants*, that is, the vilest servant: Ah heavy and prodigious curse! for the Kernel and quintessence of this curse was spirituall, whereby *Canaan* and his posterity are sealed up for slaves to sin, and excommunicate from the Church of God: what a brave opportunity did *Ham* loose here to get a large and long blessing on himselfe and his posterity? and this opportunity he lost for ever: for the decree is gone forth, [a servants of servant shalt thou be.]

Gen. 9. 24, 25.

(^c) *Nec enim tantum hominis verbum est, sed Dei, imo plus & potius est prophetia quam ultionis aviditas.* Ferus in loc.

(^d) *Non dubito filium ejusdem cum patre ingenij fuisse, & ipsum quoque, ut patrem rississe Noe,* Mercer.

Soul thy not obeying God in such a nick of time may loose thee, thou knowest not what: the doing or not doing of one act may undoe thee for ever: See another instance in *Saul* [And thou shalt goe downe before me to Gilgal, and behold I will come downe unto thee to offer burnt offerings, and to sacrifice sacrifices of peace-offerings, seaven dayes thou shalt tarry till I come to thee, and shew thee what thou shalt doe] And he tarried seaven dayes according to the set time that *Samuel* had appointed, but *Samuel* came not to Gilgal, and the people were scattered from him, and *Saul* said, bring hither a burnt offering to me, and peace-offerings, and he offered the burnt offering; and it came to passe that as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt offering, behold *Samuel* came, and *Saul* went out

1 Sam. 10. 8.

Verse 10.

13.

to meet him, that he might salute him : Samuel had bid Saul stay seven dayes in Gilgal till he came : six dayes he stayeth, and part of the seaventh, he had but a little part of a day to expect longer : his impatience will not give him leave, for he offereth Sacrifice before Samuel comes, and he had no sooner offered sacrifice but Samuel come : *As soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt offering, behold Samuel came, and tels him, thou hast done foolishly, for now, marke the word [now] now would the Lord have established thy Kingdome upon Israel for ever* : This one opportunity improved would have sealed thee the Kingdome ; one act of obedience now, would have given thee a lasting mercy : this minute of time would have got thee a Crown : scarce is Saul warme in his Kingdome when he hath even lost it : how neer may we be to a mercy and misse it ? Couldst thou not wait a little longer Saul ? Thou wast within an inch of a Kingdome, within a haire's breadth of an established fruition : Saul waited till the season, and then brake off : He got nothing by all his six days waiting, because he watcht not this season : and the reason is, because though obedience at all times please God, yet there is a punctuall and peculiär season of obedience, wherein he blesteth : all the other acts of obedience are but preparatory, there is a speciall nick and season of obedience which crownes with blessing : perseverance is the only grace that crownes a Christian : *Methuselah* lived nine hundred ninety and nine years, if he had fallen away from grace at the nine hundred ninety and nine years end, all the good that he had done or got before had been quite forgotten : To obtaine a blessing, its not enough to obey God, but we must obey him in that point and nick of time wherein he will give the blessing ; as to meet with a friend in a place ; its not enough to walke there often, you may walke there a week together and not meet him, but you must walke there in that nick of time wherein he appoints you the meeting.

6 There is sometimes an opportunity given to receive some gift of the spirit, which if we neglect we shall never have the like againe : as you may see in *Elisba*, when *Elijah* was to leave the world, and to ride in state to heaven in his Coach or bright Chariot, saith he to *Elisba*, *Ask what I shall doe for thee before I be taken away from thee*, and *Elisba* said, *I pray thee let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me*, saith *Elijah* *thou hast asked an*
hard

bard thing; neverthelesse, if you see mee when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so: And it came to passe as they still went on, and talked, that behold there appeared a Chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder, and Elijah went up by a whirlwinde into heaven, and Elisha saw it, &c.

Here was a ticklish opportunity, a slippery opportunity: had *Elisha* missed it, he had never had the like againe: So mayst thou have some gales and rushings in of the spirit, to put thee on to duty, some breathings of the spirit to blow up thy cold heart into holy heats and desires; some coruscations and beames of the spirit to enlighten thee, some joggings and provokings to heavenly-mindednesse, some strengthnings of the spirit against a lust proffered thee, which if you put off it may be thou wilt never have the like againe.

7 So when a man doth by providence enjoy the society and company of a godly man, that is, of a choice spirit; here he hath an opportunity to taste fruit from him, which if he neglect, he may never have the like againe.

A man may by providence be cast upon the company and fruition of such a precious and fruitfull Christian, such an experienced Christian, that he shall hardly meet with such a one againe in all his dayes: Ah! now how shouldst thou improve his graces whilst thou hast him? How shouldst thou suck experiences from him? How soon he may be removed from thee, or thou from him, thou knowest not: providence that lends thee him and his graces for a while, may carry him from thee to another place; and then thou loosest thou knowest not what: Ah! how will the losse of such an opportunity afterward damp the spirit!

Thus *Felix*, whilst *Paul* was in prison, enjoyed a rich opportunity: he had a rich Jewel in the Casket of opportunity: Ah what an improvement might *Felix* have made of *Paul* all that time? he had been happy *Felix* then: Sometimes he sent for *Paul* and heard him reason of righteousness, temperance and judgement to come; but he might have had more of *Pauls* company if he would: he knew not what a price he had in his hand whilst he had *Paul* in his custody: but he lost his opportunity, for within two yeares he was removed, and never enjoyed such an opportunity againe: And thus I have done with the first part.

Act. 24. 24.

2 There are opportunities of doing good, which if we neglect we may never have the like again.

1 When you are travelling, and fall in upon the way with a man you never saw before, and a thousand to one never shall see again; here's an opportunity for thee to doe his soul good, to drop heaven into his soul; which season thou maist never have againe to season him with a word of grace: Thus *Philip* falling in with the *Eunuch* whilst he was riding on his way homeward from *Jerusalem*, closed with him and preached Christ unto him, and was an instrument to save the soule of him whom he never saw before, nor ever after saw againe.

Act. 8.35.37.

2 When thou art in an office for a time, it may be but one yeare, thou art cloathed with authority and opportunity to doe good, which thou maist never have againe. Time will strip thee of thy robes of Authority, thou mayst lay down thy life before thou layst downe thy office; if not, yet annuall offices expire, and fall off of themselves, and when thine authority is gone, thy opportunity is gone: as a man that hath a sword or a staffe in his hand, if his staffe be wrenched out of his hand, he hath lost his opportunity to foile his enemy; so it is when the staffe of authority is passed out of thy hand unto another, thy time is gone.

Act. 24.27.

Felix whilst he was in office, was married unto a gallant opportunity to release *Paul* out of Prison, but he did not husband the opportunity, and he was divorced from it for ever, for saith the Text, after two years *Portius Festus* came into *Felix* room, and *Felix* willing to shew the Jewes a pleasure left *Paul* bound.

3 So when a man is dying, upon his death-bed, there you have an opportunity to doe his soul good, which you shall never have againe: Thus Christ dropt in grace and good counsell into the thiefe upon the Crosse, the Crosse was his death-bead, which had it been omitted, the thiefs soul had been lost within a few howres for ever, and the opportunity gone too.

4 So when a friend is in affliction, then thou hast an opportunity to strike whilst the iron is hot, to humble him while he is humbled: to speake a word in season to him while his heart is seasoning and melting: as the Jewes and those easterne people doe plough and sow their ground when the former raine

raine hath softened it, Ah! Sow then (for now is the opportunity) I say, sow the seed of instruction upon a sinners heart, while the former or latter raine of affliction falls upon him, it is a softning time, a melting time; while the raine drops, the earth is soft: He that made a scorner of godlinesse before, will then be of another minde, and hear counsell then if ever he will hear it.

5 So when a godly man is by providence cast into a family, he hath an opportunity to distill showres and drop divine influences, whilst (like a star) he is fixed there, which if he omits, he may never have the like againe: thus *Paul* being in the *Jaylors* family preacht the Gospel to him, and to his household, and he beleived in God (saith the Text) with all his household. Act. 16. 34.

6 So when a Minister hath interests in the hearts of a people, let him improve it, and look to it, for he knows not how soon the tide may turne, and he never have the like opportunity againe. 2 Tim. 4. 2 3.

7 Rich men, You that are in prosperity and have your sayles fill'd with gales of wealth, you have opportunities to honour God, which others have not, and which if you neglect you may suddenly never have the like againe.

1 You have wherewith to maintaine and encourage the Gospel, to give to the Saints; and truly it is the highest advance of riches, to make riches an instrument to advance religion: Oh then honour God with thy substance, lay out for God and his Gospel, least the Lord, thou knowest not how soon, send a North-wind to blow upon thee, and freez up thy wealth, and then thou mayest never have the like tide of opportunity againe.

2 Besides, you have greater opportunities for hearing the word, and praying in your secret closets, then poor men have, who live upon the sweat of their brows: you may be praying when the poor must be labouring for their living, you may be meditating, whilst, they must be getting their bread.

If then you, rich ones, see poor men that are necessitated to work hard for a meane living, more lively, more frequent and abundant in duties then your selves are, know now you walke not by rule, where much is given, much is required; and to whom God hath given much, of them he asks the more;

D

who

who are happier, they that are in the Kitchin, or they that attend upon the Prince?

Ah, you rich and great persons! this is a high favour and transcendent honour, that God hath freed you from inferiour drudgery, to imploy you in more noble services in the Court, while others must serve their occasions; you that have fulnesse of the world, you have fulnesse of time to enjoy the Kings presence, and wait upon Christs person in holy duties, and therefore know that you should be more with God then others: Holinesse is your trade, and your closets are your shops, and every day is a Sabbath day to you: Take your opportunities; that may be enough for one which is too little for another; where God gives much opportunities, they must doe much for God.

8 A man may have an opportunity to suffer for Christ, which if he neglect he may never have the like againe: To suffer for Christ is honorable, God will not put this honour upon every one, he puts this honour upon his vessels of honour: he gives grace to a man, and casts him into a vessel of silver or gold, and then throws him into the fire to melt, and suffer for his name: The metal of that Christian must be silver or gold that can suffer for Christ: a vessel of wood, throw him into the fire, his hoops will fly off, hee'l breake asunder, and never hold out.

The three children that were cast into the fiery furnace, what glorious mould and metall were they made of? Had they not taken the opportunity to suffer for God, they might never have met with such a one againe.

1. For what a spreading fame and glory of God did their sufferings scatter over all the world? God is acknowledged and adored by *Nebuchadnezzar*, a Decree is made that every People, Nation, and Language which speake amisse against the God of *Shadrach, Meshack and Abednego*, shall be cut in pieces: *Then Nebuchadnezzar spake and said, blessed be the God of Shadrach Meshach and Abednego, who hath sent his Angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the Kings word, and yeelded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any God, except their own God. Therefore I make a Decree that every People, Nation or Language, which speake any thing amisse against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-*
nego,

nego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dung-hill, because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort: Here Gods glory shines out of their sufferings, even enemies acknowledge none like Israels God.

Here they found a most glorious opportunity to honour God; which if they had lost, they might never have had the like againe; had they lost this opportunity God had lost his glory.

2 To honour themselves: for

1 They were no sooner in the fire, but they met with *Jesus Christ* there; Then *Nebuchadnezzar* the King was astonied, and rose up in haste, and spake and said unto his Counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? they answered and said unto the King, True O King: He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt, and the forme of the fourth is like the Son of God: They were but three that were cast into the fire, but *Nebuchadnezzar* saw foure there: And the forme of the Fourth was like the Son of God: Whether it were *Jesus Christ* the naturall Son of God, or an Angel, who are called the Sons of God, here was a great honour; the Angels of the Lord are present with the Saints in their sufferings, and *Jesus Christ* is present with the Saints in their sufferings: When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, and through the Rivers they shall not overflow thee, when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the flame kindle on thee: Angels company and Christs company is a wondrous honour: We count it a great honour to have Princes to be our companions; the Saints in their sufferings have Princes for their companions, *Jesus Christ* and his Angels: and thy suffering time is the opportunity to enjoy the company of these Princes and great ones.

Dan. 3. 24, 25.

Verse 28.
Job 1. 6.

Isai. 43. 2.

Verf 27.

2 It was an honour to them, that God should worke such a noble miracle for them, as to stop the mouth of the fire, that it could not burn them; And the Princes, Governours and Captains, and the Kings Counsellors being gathered together, saw these men upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an haire of their heads singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them: Ah wonderfull! So did God honour his servants: the fire still retained its property of burning, and

(=) *Impossibile est propria perfectio vel ad momentum temporis suis subiectis separari.* Keckerman log. lib. 1.
Nam si urendi vis ab igne esset sublata, miraculum plane nullum a Deo fuit. Editum; quid enim miraculi sit eam rem non urere, quæ non possit urere? Non ergo in tollendâ ab igne urendi facultate miraculum consistebat, sed in eo quod cum vim urendi maximâ ignis iste Babilonicus obtineret, vis illa fuit divinitus impedita, ne se exeret, ut quidem statim post exurrit absumens eos qui in fornacem eandem iniiciebantur. Kecker. ibid.

yet could not burne them: the power and (=) property of burning was not taken from the fire, for then it had been no miracle: what miracle is it for that thing not to burne which cannot burne? The miracle therefore did not consist in taking away the naturall power of burning from the fire, but in this that when the fire had the gratest heat and power of burning, yet it could not burne them: The fire had its full power and property to burne, but could not exercise it: what an honour was it to walke safe in the midst of the fire? How did God magnify them, that they should be in the fire and yet be safe from the fire? the fire doth not kill them but kisse them: the fire doth not consume them, but court them; and denies it self, to give them courteous entertainment: they walke in the fire as in a pleasant aire: what honours are these put upon poor creatures! they were bound hand and foot, when they were cast into the fire, and yet *Nebuchadnezzar* sees them walk: the fire had heat to burne their bonds, but not power to touch their bodies: Had they mist this opportunity of suffering they had missed of this honour.

3 Their suffering was the Churches honour and advantage; it won great respect and honour to the Jewish Church and Religion: *Nebuchadnezzar* makes a Decree that no people shall speake any thing amisse of the God of *Shadrach*, *Mesbath* and *Abednego*: Now their God comes into request with the King himselte, and their deliverance flying abroad upon the wing of fame, makes their God famous, and their Religion famous, and their people the Jews famous: How many taunts and derisions cast daily at the Jewes for their worship, were suppressed by the severity of this Law? Without doubt this Decree was of speciall use for the comfort of the Jewes, they had a sweet, calme, and Halcion time of peace and ferenity upon it; Ah! What honour and advantage brought they to the Church by taking this opportunity of suffering?

4 And did not their suffering and their deliverance (think yee) strengthen the weak faith of their distressed brethren the poor Jewes? Did it not inspire them with corage, & root them deeper in the love of their Religion? How many *Heathens* and *Chaldeans* might this great miracle of deliverance worke home to the true God? Surely *Nebuchadnezzars* Decree made the learning of God famous among the *Gentiles*, a speciall helpe to

to conversion; as we may see in the three Magi or wise Men. Matth. 2.

Ah my beloved! your sufferings may be the conversion of others: How willing would we be to preach a Sermon if we knew it would be the conversion of some Soul? Let me tel you that thy suffering for Christ may be the best Sermon that ever thou preacheest all thy life long, and win more upon souls, then all the Sermons thou didst preach in all thy life: as we say, that to live well is the best preaching, I say also, to suffer well is the best preaching; To suffer for godlinesse is the most powerfull preaching of godlinesse. He that can suffer best for *Jesus Christ* is the best preacher of *Jesus Christ*: the best sufferer is the best Preacher.

Ah you Saints! this way you may all be Preachers: let your lives preach, and let your sufferings preach *Jesus Christ*: loose not your opportunities of suffering.

5 I am sure also they will increase your future glory: 2 Cor. 4. 17. every suffering will be a graine put into the scale of your heavenly glory, to make it more weighty: *For our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*: Oh! be for ever contented to have fellowship with *Jesus Christ* in all his sufferings; It is said that the Saints have grace for grace with *Jesus Christ*, be content also to have suffering for suffering with *Jesus Christ*, you shall also have glory for glory with him: if you have suffering for suffering, you shall also have glory for glory with him: Ah then! Loose not your opportunities of suffering for *Jesus Christ*: if you loose your opportunity of suffering, you loose a part, a beame of your glory, your glory in heaven will be so much the darker.

9 You that are young men, that are the twigs and branches of youth, you have blossomes of opportunities growing on you, which if you neglect you shall never have the like againe: There are opportunities that are married to youth, which if you sever can never be united againe: you have strength to serve Christ, which old age hath not: you have yet no cares of the world in your heads to keep out heavenly contemplations: you are yet scarce in the world, and therefore have not much of the world in you: Oh drinke in heaven, before you drinke in the cares of the world into your thoughts:

thoughts: Fill your thoughts first with God before you fill them with the world; fill your Sayles with the gales of Christ, before they are filled with the aery vanities of the creature: you have a great deale of your time before you, when old men have their time behind them, gone and past, and but a little of it left before them.

Hester 3.9.
To, 11.

Verse 13.

Hester 4.14.

10 So there is an opportunity sometimes to save a whole Church, which if we neglect, we may never have the like again: Such an opportunity came before *Hester*, which if she had not look't it in the face, and embraced it, all the Jewes had been cut off at one blow by *Hamans* policy: He had got the Kings Decree that the thing should be done, *If it please the King let it be written that they may be destroyed, and the King tooke his Ring from off his hand, and gave it unto Haman, and said unto Haman, the silver is given unto thee, the people also to doe with them as it seemeth good to thee*: The signet-Ring did represent the Kings authority and name; and therefore when one gave his Ring to another he gave his power over to him to doe what he would in his name; as *Pharaoh* took his Ring off from his hand, and put it upon *Josephs* hand, that *Joseph* might in the Kings name signe Decrees as Viceroy of Egypt; and *Alexander* the Great when he was sick and lay speechlesse, and saw no hopes of life, took his Ring from his finger, and gave it to *Perdiccas* to signifie (as is thought) that 'twas his mind that *Perdiccas* should succeed him: So *Haman* had got the Kings Ring to signe the fatall Decree, *And letters were sent by post into all the Kings Provinces to destroy, to kill and to cause to perish all Jewes both young and old, little children and women in one day*: Here the poor Church was at a dead lift: *Hamans* teeming hopes were at the birth, nay (as it were) betwixt the wombe and the world; and now heres an opportunity (now or never) to step in and save the Church: Save Lord, now or never, *Hester* takes the opportunity, *Who knows saith Mordecai to her, whether thou art come to the Kingdome for such a time as this?* Such a time, which carries nothing but death in the wombe of it: Such a time, wherein the Jewes, as if all their necks had stood upon one shoulder, were destined to the blow: at this time *Hester* strangled the designe, and saved the Church by taking the opportunity, which had she neglected, a thousand to one she her selfe had never escaped to have had the like againe.

11 Sometimes there's an opportunity given to reforme and purge a Land, which if we neglect may never be given againe in our dayes, as you may see in *Judges*, the first and second Chapter; in the first Chapter there you shall finde that the Children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites that inhabited Jerusalem, but the Jebusites did dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem: Neither did Manasseh drive out the inhabitants of Bethshean and her townes, and neither did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer: and neither did Zebulun drive out the Inhabitants of Kitron, nor the Inhabitants of Nabal, but the Canaanites dwelt among them, and became Tributaries, and what then? see *Judges* 2. 1, 2, 3. An Angel of the Lord came up from Gilgall to Bochim, and said, I made you to goe up out of Egypt, and have brought you into the Land which I sware unto your Fathers, and I said, I will never breake my Covenant with you, and you shall make no league with the Inhabitants of this Land, you shall throw downe their Alters, but you have not obeyed my voice [you have not apprehended the season and opportunity, what then? tis lost in your dayes, and in your sons dayes, for many generations] For now I will not drive them out from before you: I have said it; it is now past cure, but they shall be as thornes in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you, And when the Angel of the Lord spake these words unto all the children of Israel, the people lift up their voice, and wept, & they called the name of that place Bochim, that is Weepers: they wept so much, because they had let slip their opportunity, but all their floods of teares could not bring back the opportunity again, nor turne the tide: I pray God this be not Englands case; time was when we had the opportunity to destroy the Canaanites, Heresie, Error, Prophane-nesse out of the land: but now the bird of opportunity is fled out of our hand: She hath taken wing, is fled away and gone: and I feare me we shall not see her againe in our days: the Scepter of *Jesus Christ* is the *primum mobile* of all good government, set him up, and his government right, and he will set States right: till this great whel be set right, all the lesser are like enough to goe wrong: Ah England! I am afraid of that Text concerning thee, Because I would have purged thee, and thou wast not purged, thou shalt not be purged from thy filthinesse any more, till I have caused my fury to rest upon thee. *Judg. 1. 21. 27. 29. 30.*

Ezek. 24. 13.

Use 1.

Let us now make application ; And first then,
Neglect not your opportunities of heaven ; make the best
of your souls opportunities : loose not opportunity for a
world : you have a world of opportunities, loose not one
opportunity for a world : O you that have souls to save, save
your opportunities : oh your soules ! oh your souls ! I am
afraid of your souls.

1 If you loose your souls, wee Ministers loose all our
labour, and Christ looseth all his blood that he hath shed for
your soules, and what account can you give to God for so
much cost ? Most of you doe not value your souls worth
the saving : Many a man doth prize his Oxe or his Asse more
then some men prize their soules.

2 The Devils have lost their opportunities, will you not
take warning by the Devils ? if you will not take your op-
portunities you will shortly be as irrecoverable as the De-
vils.

Heb. 12. 17.

3 Opportunities lost cannot be bought againe for gold : As
Abah could not buy *Naboths* Vineyard of him, *Naboth* would
take no money for it ; so opportunities lost cannot be bought
back againe for money ; if thou wouldst bid never so high for
them, thou canst not have them upon any price ; thou canst
not pray thine opportunities back againe, thou canst not
weep thine opportunities back againe, as you may see by *Esau*,
he lost his opportunity, and when afterwards he would have inhe-
rited the blessing, he could finde no place of repentance, though he
sought it with tears : *Jacob* was no sooner gone away with the
blessing, but *Esau* comes in with hope of the blessing, the
blessing was gone but one minute, and yet cannot be reco-
vered.

Gen. 4. 6, 7.

4 Every opportunity thou loosest thou growest worse
and worse : thou art bad to day, if thou loosest this opportu-
nity, thou shalt be worse to morrow : as *Cain*, God conversed
with him (as it were) to day, *Why art thou wroth ? why is thy*
countenance fallen, if thou doe well, shalt thou not be accepted ? and
if thou doe not well sin lyeth at the door : but he was not bettered
by this opportunity, and presently he grew worse upon it,
for the next thing he did was, he talked with his brother *Abel*,
and slew him.

Verse 8.

5 Salvation, which these opportunities carry in their
wombe,

wombe, is a transcendent birth, a blessing of the first magnitude: who would not be saved? all things else are but shadows and trifles, to this reality called *Salvation*.

Those are the sons of wisdom that contend for substance, for God, for heaven: God is not a thing indifferent, and, *Jesus Christ* is no circumstance: Honors, ease, worldly profits and pleasures, all these, these I say, are in their nature things indifferent, and being compared and put in the scale with Christ, are lesse then things indifferent, even toyes, dreames, losse, dung, meer nothings, at best but fading things, that passe away as a picture drawn upon the Ice, which soon vanisheth: They are meer accidents, nay separable accidents, that may be taken from the subject without its hurt, a man may spare them and yet be happy; but God is the Essence of the Soul, the eternall Entity of our happinesse. *This is life eternall to know thee the onely true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.*

*Ista divitia, nec
vera sunt nec
vestra.*

Ioh. 17. 3.

6 It may be (O Sinner) that art now in thy sins, it may be this very day, even this particular Sermon, may be thy day, that if thou repent not at this very Sermon thou loosest eternall life for ever.

Thus *Jesus Christ* ended the day of grace on the Scribes and Pharisees even in the very Sermon time whilst Christ was preaching to them, they were delivered up to hardnesse of heart.

7 In a word, to passe by *Jesus Christ* carrieth with it the most surpassing wrath: to disrespect the offer of mercy ushers in the greatest misery. *How shall wee escape if wee neglect so great Salvation.* That is, you shall not escape so, you shall not passe with an ordinary doome upon you.

Heb. 2. 3.

Sinners! opportunity attends you, Christ is yours if you'll have him: the Lord *Jesus* is at your service, if you will imbrace him: God sends up and downe the world to offer Salvation, hence that phrase [*my salvation is gone forth*] Mercy wayts on you, and kneels to you, and does obeysance to your souls; when you are running from it, mercy runs after you to catch you and imbrace you: Ah how long hath free-grace stood at your doors, waiting your leisure when you would let her in? yet she calls and knocks againe, you may yet be saved, but if you will goe on still, and disrespect mercy, it brings the greatest misery; The greatest severity goes along

E

with

with the Gospel : greatest severity goes along with the greatest mercy.

The Gospel is the greatest mercy that ever saluted the world, and there's the greatest severity with the Gospel that ever came with any mercy into the world : Men shall be deeper in hell because heaven was offered them, and they would not : All they suffer here is but typicall of the wrath to come : here they but sip of the top of Gods cup, there they must drink the dreggs, though it be eternity, to the bottome ; a Sodomite in Hell shall fare better then the refuser of *Jesus Christ*, See the 10. *Mat. 14, 15. verses*, and *Whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when you depart out of that house or City, shake off the dust of your feet ; Verily I say unto you it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorah in the day of Judgement, then for that City.* Is not here the greatest severity with the greatest mercy ? So againe in *Mat. 11. 21, 22. Woe unto thee Corazin, woe unto thee Bethsaida, for if the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sydon, they would have repented long agoe in Sackcloth and ashes ; but I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sydon at the day of Judgement then for you.* Is not here the greatest severity going along with the greatest mercy ?

God can better bear any thing then the contempt of his free grace in the offers of mercy.

More yet ; When the Gospel began to be preached, saith the Text, *Now is the Axe laid to the root of the Tree ; Jesus Christ comes with his Basket and his Axe, his Basket to gather fruit, his Axe to cut downe the tree if it will not bear fruit ; and is not here the greatest severity with the greatest mercy ?* If there were a sword on *Moses* thigh, there is an Axe in *Christs* hand. *Now is the Axe laid to the root of the tree* [Now] that is, your opportunity is Now, if you passe by this [now] you are gone ; for ought I can tell, you are chopt off presently. Neglect not the present [Now] least yee be cut off for ever.

8 Consider sin is your dishonour ! it doth (f) degrade you. The vesture of mans nature is base and beggarly since it was patched with sin : It is a debasing of the gold to marry it with any mettall of a courser birth, so 'tis a dishonour to man to match his golden nature (so God at first made it holy and righteous) I say, to match thy golden nature to base-borne drosse, to low-borne sin, which derives its pedigree from hell.

None

Matth. 3. 10.

** Munditia enim necessaria est ad hoc, quod mens Deo applicetur, quia mens Humana inquinatur ex hoc quod inferioribus rebus conjungitur, sicut qualibet Res ex immixtione peioris fordescit, ut argentum ex immixtione plumbi. Aquia. sum. 22. a. q. 8 l. ar 8 corp.*

None but *Jesus Christ* is a fit match for the soule of man, take the opportunity then, and make choice of *Jesus Christ*, Espouse thy soul to him, and keep the marriage knot inviolate with him, *Rom. 7.4.*

9 Come in quickly, take the opportunity to come in presently to *Jesus Christ*, least your sins (before you are aware) ripen too fast, and you be cut downe you know not how soon Sins (e) multiply; one sin will shortly multiply into many; they are like circles in a pond, one circle begets another, so doth one sin beget another, a lesser begets a greater, as in a case of staires, one staire is a step to another, so every sin is a staire to helpe up to higher and worse sins.

It is wonderfull to behold the great flames bred out of small sparks of sin, how one sin hatched a greater; sin is like a whirlpool, which first sucks in one part, and then another, and never desists untill it drawes in and plungeth the whole body.

10 A man may performe duties of Religion after his day of grace is set upon him: you thinke that as long as a man performs duties, and doth many good things; his day of grace is not past: My beloved, observe me. A man may come to Church, performe religious duties, doe many good things, have many meltings upon his heart, after his day of grace is past and gone: as *Saul* went on in duties of Religion aswell after *Samuel* had pronounced the Lords doom upon him as before. How many times was he offering sacrifice to the Lord, after the Prophet had told him that he was a man rejected? How many good speeches came from him? what meltings some time fell in upon his soule? as if there were hopes of him, and yet a lost man, his opportunities were past: close then, close presently with the opportunities of *Jesus Christ*.

My second use shall be, to set out unto you the excellency and Majesty of Gods opportunities, that you may stand in awe and reverence of them, and by no means slight them or neglect them: Mysteries are dreadfull, we honor them; There are mysteries in Gods opportunities. My beloved, there are these three characters of myserie and excellency engraven upon Gods opportunities; It may be some may thinke of and adde more, but I at present observe three characters of myserie and excellency upon Gods opportunities. First, they are easie, Secondly, they are sudden and unexpected, Thirdly, sometimes they come beside our intention.

E 2

I First:

De uno peccato enim in aliud, ex una turpitudine et stultitia in aliam ruerant. Ita Aetas parentum peior avis tulit, Hos nequiores, mox daturos progeniem vitiosam. Neque tantum a peccato ad peccatum, sed ab errore et stultitia ad perperam ad insaniam et corruptionem mentis, ac rationis everisionem proceditur. Cocceius, ad 2 Tim. 3.

Use 2.

Mysteria tremenda.

1 First, Gods opportunities are easie, they bring great matters to birth with easie travell: they bring hard things to passe easily: Oh that this were observed. In Gods opportunitie it is an easie thing to beleeve, to repent, to subdue a sin, and to overcome a temptation: as it is an easie matter for the Ship to go when she hath the winde to fill her sayls. Every thing is done easily in Gods opportunitie, whether it be to save a soul, or to destroy a soule: because God in his opportunity makes all things concur and brings circumstances together to strike up the action suddenly you shall see it.

1 Sam. 31. 4.

1 First, In the ruine of a man, in the destruction of a man: when 'tis Gods opportunitie to destroy a man, what easie way will he make for't? As *Saul*, when Gods time came that he must perish, he slew himselfe, there was no difficulty in the worke, he fell himselfe upon his sword, as the stone doth to its center: How easily was *Jericho* taken? when the Priests blew the Trumpets, and the people shouted, the wals fel down flat of themselves: How easily was *Pharaoh* and his Army destroyed in the red Sea? The Sea was divided, and a way made for him, that he might not stand upon't, but run voluntary into the womb of death; Oh the efficacy of Gods opportunities! How easily did *Goliath* fall, what stirres and blusterings did he act a little before upon the stage of pride and boasting, making a challenge to all *Israel*? but when Gods opportunitie comes how easily is he slaine? And therefore the Scripture speaks this with an Emphasis. *So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine, and slew him, but there was no sword in the hand of David.*

2 So Gods opportunities worke good for men easily, they bring great matters of good to passe with no difficulty: when 'tis Gods opportunitie that *David* shall take possession of his Kingdome, it falls into his mouth (as it were) not onely *Saul*, but all his sons, (that might stand as so many screens between *David* and the Crowne) are taken out of the way. The house of *Judah*, they of themselves, come and annoint *David* King over them. Then *Abner Sauls* Generall of his whole Army, displeased with *Ishbosheth* revolts to *David*, and all the Tribes come to *Hebron* to annoint *David* King over *Israel*: Do you see? this great worke is done to his hand.

So in Gods opportunities it is an easie thing to beleve and repent, *Act. 16. 14. Luk. 19. 6. 1 Kin. 19. 20.*

Ah my beloved! the ease of beleiving and repenting attends a peculiar opportunity of Gods owne vouchsafing in which he doth more readily worke then at other times.

How shall I know when 'tis easie for me to beleve and repent?

1 When the light of the spirit doth flash into the eye of thy soule, then thy worke is easie, as when the light of the day doth dart its rayes in at the windows of thy Chamber 'tis easie for thee to read a small print. Thus when a light from Heaven did shine upon *Paul*, and shine into *Paul*, how easie did his worke come off? Lord what wilt thou have me to doe?

2 When thy heart is made combustible and ready to take fire: as when the tinder is dry 'tis easie to light a candle, the least sparke that falls on it takes fire, and when the fire is combustible, it is an easie matter to kindle a fire, it burnes presently: So when thy heart is softned it easily takes the impression of the seale upon it, and when thy thoughts are stir'd up and made combustible, 'tis an easie matter to kindle them into a fire of repentance, as in the *Acts*, when they were pricked in the heart, they said, Men and brethren what shall wee doe? repent (saith *Peter*) and they took presently. Act. 2.

3 When thine affections and desires are upon the wheel, then any worke is easie, as when a load is upon the wheel 'tis drawne easily, whereas if you should goe about to lug it along upon the ground it comes on heavily; and therefore the Lord pursuing *Pharaoh*, took off his Chariot wheels, and they drave on heavily: So when God puts thine affections upon the wheel, and sets them a going, then 'tis easie for thee to doe great matters, and therefore observe thine opportunity.

2 Gods opportunities are sudden and unexpected: they come upon us without preparation; God doth not send us word before hand, when he will visit us and come to us, as sometimes we send to a friend that we will dine with him, or speake with him at such an howre; but Gods opportunities come suddenly upon us in the twinkling of an eye, before we be aware, when we know nothing of it, and the spirit rusheth in upon a man, and gives him no notice before hand, Thus *Christ* came and called *Matthew* [follow me] on a sudden, whilst

whilst he was sitting at the receipt of Custome, *And he arose and followed him.*

Some poor soules have sent up many a prayer to heaven for assurance, and it hath not come, and they poor creatures have thought that God hath not regarded them all the while, and then, on a sudden, assurance hath come when they look't not for it: Ah dear father, how many mercies from thee have come to us uninvited! thy preventing grace and mercy doth alwayes visit us uninvited: we send not for it, it comes freely to us.

3 Gods opportunities come besides our intention, they come sometimes when we aime not at them: We stumble upon heaven, when we are seeking something else; as a man that digged in his garden only to set roots and plants, and found a pot of gold there; and as *Saul* went to *Samuel* to enquire for his Fathers Asses, and found a Kingdome. This was besides his intention, he sought one thing and found another, his poor Asses were in his intention, but a Crowne was the object he met with in execution. Oh the misteries of opportunity! 'Tis so many times in the matters of heaven, *I am found saith God of them that sought me not.* Many a soul findes Heaven besides his intencion: How strangely doe some meet with a Commission? they meet with heaven and grace by accident (as it were) they goe to a place onely to seek health or food, something for the body, and there they light upon (besides their intention) salvation for their soules, as the lame man seeing *Peter* and *John* asked an almes, there was all his intention, and met with a cure both of body and soule: and the woman of *Samaria* came to the Well for water, and there found a Christ. It was an accident to her to meet Christ there: Gods opportunity comes upon her besides her intention: Ah gracious God! that she should come for water that very houre when Christ was there, not before nor after, but that very houre when Christ is there: she came for water which was but puddle, and found a Spring of life; So the Marri-ners that took *Jonah* into their Ship, they received him onely for the fare, he payd them, that was all their intention, their fare and pay for carriage was all their aime, but they met with a better fare, conversion to the true God, *verse 16. Then the men (boy were Heathens) feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice*

a sacrifice to the Lord [that is, to the true God, not to Neptune but to the Lord] and made vov'es, So Moses went to mount *He-reb* onely to keep his Fathers sheep, but there he met with God in the burning bush. Thus you see Gods opportunities are cloathed with stately robes of mystery upon them, behold them therefore with holy feare and reverence.

My third use shall give the meeting to tender souls, who will be ready from the breasts of this doctrine to suck in fears and scruples, giving up their opportunities for gone: If this be so, then we have lost our opportunities; I am an old sinner, and have stood it out all my dayes hitherto against Jesus Christ, he hath often called me, and I have often refused him. *Use 3.*

Yet thou art not in hell, thou art yet on this side the grave: O praise mercy and free grace, that thou art not yet in the center of hell: thou canst not say that the oyle of opportunity is spent, as long as thou hast a vessell more, a day, or year yet more left to receive it; the widdows oyle ran still as long as there was a vessell to receive it: Thou canst not say that opportunity is done, till life be done: God hath many opportunities, though many are lost, yet all are not past. Thou sayst thou hast lost some opportunities, but God hath many opportunities in store: Indeed, if God had but one opportunity for thee and no more, thou wert gone as *Esau* said unto *Jacob*, *Hast thou but one blessing of my Father?* But God hath many blessings, he hath many mercies, and therefore many opportunities for lost soules, he doth not give off for many denyals; after many refusalls God comes on again, and woes afresh: he hath a treasury of opportunities, a quiver full of opportunities, and if one arrow of mercy be spent, if more arrows of opportunitie be lost, and throwne away upon thee, he hath more yet to shoot at thee, and more yet; Oh that God would now draw out an arrow of conversion, and hit thy soule with it! What though God hath bent his bow, and shot many an arrow, many a Sermon at thee, and missed? Yet he will shoot againe, he can shoot and hit, he is rich in mercies, and therefore rich in opportunities: Oh, but I have left my first love; I have abated in my flame of love to God, and his word, and the power of godlinesse; and is my opportunity yet before me to recover? is it not lost? No, it is not lost, thine *Object 1.*

Ans.

Gen. 27. 38.

Object 2.

Ans.

thine opportunity yet is not gone, as you may see in *Revel.* 2.4.5. *Neverthelesse I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.* Observe, thou that hast decayed in the heat of thy first love, God hath somewhat against thee, he hath a quarrell with thee, and therefore awake with all speed, for God hath somewhat against thee, but yet thine opportunity is not gone: for saith God in the next words; *Remember therefore whence thou art fallen, and repent, and doe thy first works,* there's yet opportunity that shines on thee, the Sun is not yet sett, though it be going downe: and if thou wilt remember whence thou art fallen, and repent, and make haste to rise, God will rather make the Sun to stand still (as he did in *Joshuahs* time) The Sun of opportunity shall rather stand still in the orbe of time, then that thou shalt loose thy soul, and therefore looke about thee.

Object. 3.

Oh but I am growne luke-warme in religion, which is the worst temper of all the rest, I care not which end goes forward.

Answer.

Christ will afford thee opportunities yet, as you may see in the Church of *Laodicea*, *Rev. 3. 15. I know thy workes [I know what they are and utterly dislike them]* thou art neither hot nor cold, Thou art neither an open enemy, nor yet truly zealous of my Gospel, verse 16. *Therefore because thou art luke-warm I will spew thee out of my mouth:* as tepid and luke-warme water doth provoke the stomack to spew it out againe: So will I (saith God) spew thee and thy profession out, it is so loathsome to me. Observe (thou luke-warme Christian) thou art in a sad and dangerous condition, God cannot bear with thy profession long, as the stomack cannot hold luke-warme water long within it, yet thine opportunities are not yet gone, for saith Christ, *Behold I stand at the door, and knock, if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in unto him, and sup with him and he with me;* though thou art luke-warme and deservest with thy profession to be spewed out of my mouth, yet I stand at the door and knock: Christ was going. (O observe thou luke-warme Christian, and therefore saith he) *I stand at the door and knock,* but (saith hee) I'll pause a while before I goe, I'll stay a little and then goe, I am unwilling to leave thee yet, though thou shut me out I will not yet be gone, though the door be lockt against me, yet I'll knock a while; for this phrase shewes that Christ was stayed from entring in presently the

Verse 20.

the doors being shut against him; yet he would stand there waiting, though you be all asleep within, yet I will see whether I can knock you up: The opportunitie waited still upon them.

But God seems to have cast me off into a Sea of sadnesse and desertion: he hath throwne me over Ship-board out of his presence into a depth of despaire; I sinke, I sinke under his anger, I feare me I shall never recover, I am so drowned in the Ocean of his frownes, his waves are gone over my Soule.

Object. 4.

Answer.

A man may thinke himselfe gone, and yet his opportunitie not gone, he may thinke himself past helpe, and yet his opportunity not past; he may say, God hath cast me off, I shall never recover more, never see the face of God more, and yet opportunity shew its face againe, and smiles upon him. I will give you a strange instance, *Jonah* in the Whales belly, he had sinned, highly against the Lord, like a Runagate who fled from his Masters service, and when he was upon the Sea, a tempest pursueth him, which would not give him over; a Lot to discover the malefactor is cast, and it falls upon *Jonas*; The Marriners they cast him over Ship-board: here was a fearfull case, to bee cast over Shipp-board with a guilty conscience: how did he fall into the Sea, that had a Sea of terror in him? Well; he is cast in, and a Whale swallows him, in whose belly he is lodged for three dayes and three nights, after such a manner as was never heard of before: how perplexed was his state think you? a man drowned and not drowned; devoured, but not digested; alive, but yet as dead; ah what a dying soul had he in the living Fish! expecting every minute the fearefull dissolution of his Soule from his body; for he was under horror of conscience, now lying on him for his sin, and dreadfull consist of Spirit, as if God had forsaken him, and given sentence on him, for you shall read, some such were his expressions, *Thou hast cast me into the deep*, that is, the Sea; *then I said, I am cast out of thy sight, my Soul fainted within me*. Here *Jonah* thought his opportunity was gone, but the Whale brings him safe to the shore, the Whales belly was a place of safety, a sanctuary to him, had not the Whale received him, he might have been drowned, for he could not swim to the shore. Ah thou poor dejected soul! know that God can be angry, and yet love thee; he can throw thee into the belly of despaire, and make thee live in it, as the child doth in the

Jonah 2.3,4.

Jonah 2. 2.

wombe, The Mothers belly is the Babes Sanctuary, the child lyes safe in the womb, so shalt thou lye safe in the belly of despair, God will make the belly or womb of despair to travel in birth till thou art delivered, and therefore doe as *Jonah* did, beleeve in the midst of despaire, pray unto the Lord; cry unto him out of the whales belly, *Out of the belly of bell* (saith *Jonah*) *I cryed and thou heardest my voice*; Ah, blessed word! God will hear thee when thou art at the worst; if thou couldst pray in hell, and repent in hell, wert thou in hell, if thou couldst beleeve there, God would hear thee there; a sweet word to a despairing soule: *Jonah* in the Whales belly said, *Yet I will look againe toward thy holy Temple*; God will give thee leave to look up to him though thou art in the bottome of destruction: *I am cast out of thy sight* (said *Jonah*) yet *I will looke againe toward thy holy Temple*? A soul is never so forsaken of God but he may look up to his God; though thou art cast out of his sight, yet he will give thee leave to look upon him: ah thou forsaken soul! a look from thee will pierce his bosom, a mournfull look from the child wounds the breast of the angry father; though the child dares not send out a word, yet a mournfull and longing look conquers his Fathers heart: Art thou forsaken of God? yet thine opportunity is not gone, dart a look upon him, if thou canst not pray to him, yet look upon him: God lookes to see whether thou wilt look upon him: he waits to be gracious, thou waitest to be comforted, he waits to comfort thee.

Isa. 30. 18.

5 Mans extremity is Gods opportunity: when thou art most ready to perish, then is God most ready to save: God ordinarily doth not save in danger, but in extremity of danger; when 'tis at the worst with thee, then 'tis Gods opportunity to help thee, as the woman that had the bloody issue, her extremity was Christs opportunity; She had a wasting disease upon her, and time added to it; twelve long years had she withered and languished under it; besides the tediousnesse, her disease must needs get head by continuance, yet more to mend the matter, poverty (which is another disease) was super-added to her sicknesse (she had spent all that she had upon Physicians) her extremity now swells great, she hath two evils at once upon her, two unsufferable evils; though she were sick, yet her wealth (as long as she had it) would have maintained and

and succoured her in her sicknesse, but now want doth pinch her no lesse then her distemper, and helps to make her perfectly miserable: she is now perfectly miserable, weak and sick, and nothing to refresh her in her weaknesse: had she spent all and gained her health it had been well enough, but alas, she hath beggered her selfe, undone her state, and her body; never the better, her mony was wasted not her disease. Now her extremity is at the height, what then? her extremity is Christs opportunity; when her case is most desperate she is healed. *If I can but touch the hemme of his garment I shall be whole.* So the widdow of Sarepta; *Elijah sent to her by God to be sustained by her: when he comes he sustaines her, she is sustained by him: for when he comes and asks her food, bring me I pray thee a morsell of bread in thine hand, she tells him, as the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a Cake, but an handfull of meal in a barrell, and a little oyle in a Cruise, and behold I am gathering two sticks, that I may goe in and dresse it for me and my Son, that we may eat it and dye.* She was now upon the borders of extremity: It was high time for the Lord to send the Prophet to her, for (poor Soul) she was now making her last meal; after one meane morsell she was yeelding her selfe over to death; she was now going to eat her last, that she might dye: and what then? truly her extremity was Gods opportunity, *Feare not said Elijah to her, goe and doe as thou hast said; make me a little Cake first, and bring it to me, and after make for thee and thy son; for thus saith the Lord God of Israel, the Barrell of meal shall not waste, neither shall the Cruise of oyle faile untill the day that the Lord sendeth rain: upon the earth.* What a showre of comfort was here? she was going to eat her last and dye, and God sends the Prophet to her to provide for her the whole famine: How opportunely doth God provide succour to our distresses! It is his glory to helpe at a pinch, to begin where wee have given over, that his mercy may be so much the more welcome by how much it is the lesse look't for.

1 Kings 17.9.

6 Though I have lost time, yet (say) Lord thou hast not lost time, thou wert before all time, and canst set time yet before me: My losse of time doth not put thee to a losse.

7 But wil God be a looser by me? I have lost him abundance of glory which I might have done him, had I improved my opportunities: In my loosing my opportunities, God hath lost a great deal of his glory.

Object.

Answer.

God will be content to sit downe by the losse if thou wilt but come in now : Oh transcendent mercy ! he will loose a great part of his glory rather then loose thy soul , for he knows he can bear the losse better then thou canst .

Pro. 19. 11.

2 What he looseth of his glory by the one way , he gaine another way , in pardoning of thee ; he counts it his glory to pardon thee : as the Holy Ghost, saith, *It is a mans glory to passe over a transgression.* In pardoning the sins thou hast lived in for a time, he will gaine glory to himselfe beyond all time ; Thou hast sinned against him some years, and so he hath lost his glory by thee for some years, but if he pardon thee thou wilt glorify him (wilt thou not ?) for ever.

Object.

3^o What ever glory thou hast lost him , he hath it all made up in Jesus Christ : come in now then and serve him cheerfully in Christ, doe more for him in a little time, then thou hast done against him in a long time.

8 But I have prayed long, and waited a great while , and the Lord doth not hear nor answer me, and therefore my opportunity is past ; when God hath done hearing prayer , the opportunity is past.

Answer.

This doth not argue that thine opportunity is gone , but that God doth not answer thee as soon as thou askest : Thine opportunity is not past, but onely God takes his leasure to hear thee when he pleaseth : the opportunity is not past, but God makes thee stay a while before he answers : the Lord doth not always time his answers to the swiftnesse of our expectations.

Numb. 22. 15.

2 Gods delayes should make thee set on him with greater strength, and his putting thee off should make thee put on a-fresh with stronger violence ; as the cold weather makes the fire burne hotter , so Gods slacknesse should make thee more hot and earnest in prayer ; and (by an holy Antiperistasis) be kindled from his coldnesse : Thus 'tis with the men of the world, when Balak sent messengers unto Balaam to come unto him, and curse the people Israel ; Balaam denyed him, and sent him word back, that God would not give him leave to come : what then ? sayth the Text, *Balak sent againe certaine Princes more, and more honorable then they* , so little is Balak discouraged with one refusall, that he sent so much the stronger message , *More Princes and more honorable* ; ah that we could be so

so importunate for our good, and with our God! a denyall doth but whet the desires of vehement Suitors: Why are yee faint in spirituall things, when yee are not denyed but delayed? doth God put the off? send up more prayers, and more honorable againe to him.

3 And therefore when after much seeking thou meetest not with peace and assurance, do not say thine opportunity is past, but rather say, thine opportunity is not yet come, or thine opportunity is yet to come, *For yet a little time, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.* Heb. 10. 37.

How shall I know mine opportunity is yet to come?

1 When thou livest in expectation when thou standest upon thy watch-tower to see what he will say unto thee.

How shall I know mine opportunity is yet to come?

2 When thou waitest in the use of means, when thou wilt not leave the use of means: when thou stickest by the poole of *Betbesda* as the lame man did, that had a disease eight and thirtie years, there he came to be healed, but he was still prevented, because when he was going downe into the water, another alwayes stept downe before him; yet there he staid, he knew there was the place and means of healing, and from thence he would not goe; if he would lye any where he would lye there: and was his opportunity lost, though he had waited long, and been put by often? (this is the very doubt) No surely: Christ visits him at last, there he waited in the use of meanes, and rather then fail he shall be healed without means.

Hab. 2. 1.

3 When the Fig-tree blossomes, then thine opportunity is yet to come, nay 'tis at hand: when any blossomes of goodnesse any buds and beginnings of a worke appear, any breathings of soul in thee after Christ, then thine opportunity is at hand; as Christ said, *Learn a Parable of the Fig-tree, when his branch is yet tender and putteth forth leaves, know that Summer is nigh;* and therefore cherish every blossome of grace, though never so tender in thee. Let not a May-frost nip them: *Be yee lift up yee everlasting doores, and the King of glory shall come in:* When your doores, your souls begin to lift up themselves ever so little after Christ, the King of glory is comming in.

Matth. 24. 32.

But you bid us take the opportunity, and come in now to *Jesus Christ*, and beleeve in him and repent, and come out of sin: alas you bid us doe what we cannot doe, we cannot beleeve, nor repent, nor come out of sin: or come to *Jesus Christ* of our selves.

Object. 9.

You

Answ. 1.

You are to beleve that you cannot beleve of your selfe, or repent of your selfe, or come out of sin by your own strength: and you are not therefore the farther from Christ, in that you are so farr from your selves, nay you are neerer to Jesus Christ. The farther you goe out of your selves, and out of your owne strength, the neerer you are gone to *Jesus Christ*: when you seriously and feelingly say that you cannot beleve of your selves, This is the first seed of faith, I say to beleve that you cannot beleve of your selves is the first seed of faith: you must first beleve your owne weaknesse, that you may have power from Christ to beleve in Christ: Is there ever a poor soul then in this Congregation, that cryes out, I cannot come out of sin of my selfe? this is the first worke and step unto *Jesus Christ*, to receive strength from him to come out of sin: dost thou say thou canst not come out of sin of thy selfe? Now thou art the farther from thy selfe, and the neerer to *Jesus Christ*: They whom Christ helps, he makes them first see themselves helpelesse; *Jesus Christ* gives strength to them, whom he makes to see their owne nothingnesse: they that say they cannot beleve, *Jesus Christ* is in the way to make them beleve: They that say Lord I cannot overcome my sin, *Jesus Christ* becomes their Conquerour for them; thy nothingnesse shall set out his power, *for my strength (saith he) is made perfect in weaknes.*

2 Cor. 12. 9.

2 And againe, whereas thou sayest, I bid thee doe what thou canst not doe, thou canst not repent, nor come out of sin of thy selfe, I answer and tell thee, *God offers his hand with thee to the worke*, he does not onely offer thee worke to doe, but he offers his hand with thee to the worke: while he bids thee beleve, his hand shall be with thee to make thee beleve: This is the excellency and kindnesse of the Covenant of grace, when the Gospel bids thee leave sin, it puts in thee a new nature, that is contrary to sin, to hate it more then hell; If a man (to whom thou owest so much) bid thee pay him a thousand pounds, and give thee the thousand pounds in thy hand to pay him, now it is easie. *Jesus Christ* in the Gospel does not onely say to thee, pay me what thou owest mee. I am thy Saviour, beleve in me, I come downe from heaven to dye for thee, come out of sin to serve me; I bought thee with a price, pay me downe thy selfe, thy service which thou owest me. I say *Jesus Christ* doth not onely thus bid thee (poor sinner) beleve in him, and come out of sin, but he is ready to give thee his grace and strength

strength to make payment. *A new heart will I give thee, and a new spirit will I put into thee*: and therefore doe not say absolutely, I cannot beleve, or I cannot come out of sin, for Jesus Christ is ready to give thee thy thousand pounds thou owest him, that thou mayst pay him out of his owne stock; that thou mayst beleve out of his treasury, that thou mayst come out of sin by his grace and mercy; The Lord Jesus offers his hand with thee to the work: as Bernard tells us of Pope *Eugenius*, that meeting with a poor but honest Bishop, he secretly gave him certaine Jewels wherewith he might present him: So Jesus Christ will give thee the Jewels of faith and repentance wherewith thou mayst present him: If God did not furnish us, we should have nothing wherewith to honour him: The Father that gave thee Christ will give thee faith to receive Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ that gave thee himselfe, will give thee his spirit to draw thee to himselfe.

Ver. 4.

How shall we know our opportunities?

I will lay downe but two things before you.

1 Consult with the Lord: as it is said of the children of Israel, that when the Gibeonites deceived them with a wile, and they spared their lives, whom they should have destroyed, the Text saith, *They asked not counsell at the mouth of the Lord*; they had an opportunity here put into their hands to destroy the Gibeonites, but they missed it, because they did not consult with the Lord: do but compare the seventh verse with the fourteenth, and you shall see how right a man may guesse of a thing sometimes, and yet want a clear light and discovery of it, because he doth not advise with the Lord; in the seventh verse, *Said the men of Israel to the Hivites, peradventure you dwell amongst us, and how shall we make league with you?* here the Israelites did guesse aright, it was past (a peradventure) for they did live amongst them; and therefore could not make a league with them: How right did they hit? how true was their conjecture? Now the lock of opportunity was before them, they might have laid hold upon it, but they were in the darke, and walkt in a cloud, not knowing who the Gibeonites were, because they asked not counsell at the mouth of the Lord, (that is) by the high Priest putting on the breast-plate of judgement wherein was the Urim and Thummim) so the reason why we know not our opportunities is because we consult not with the

Joshua 9.14.

Joh. 15. 1.
1 Cor. 3. 9.

the Lord : as he is the maker of time, so he is the revealer of time unto us : Nay, Gods will to worke at such a time, is that which makes an opportunity, as suppose a man in a curious Apple-tree or Plumb-tree ; your opportunity to gather, and carry away fruit is, when it is his will to shake the tree, before or after is no opportunity : you may walke, and watch about the tree, when he will shake downe the fruit, 'but when he hath done shaking, your opportunity is done. So the Lord, who is the husbandman of his Church, he hath among all his other trees, planted the tree of time, and he himselfe sits upon the top of the tree (as the God of time, the disposer of time) and when it is his will to shake the tree, then is your opportunity : So that if you would know your opprtunities you must consult with the Lord, Lord, when wilt thou shake thy tree? when wilt thou drop downe the fruit, that I may gather into my lap?

2 If you would not loose any opportunity, apprehend every one ; as *Abraham* by entertaining strangers, entertained Angels unawares : As a man that keeps an *Inne*, by entertaining all travellers that come, oftentimes entertaines a Noble-man, or a Prince ; So if thou entertaine all opportunities that come, thou shalt at last entertaine the noble opportunity, the Angel opportunity, the Prince of opportunities, the Soul-saving opportunity ; a thousand to one thou shalt entertaine *Christ* at last ; as the *Inne* at *Bethlem* that entertained all passengers, entertained *Christ* himself there.

Sinners, I told you before, that God will at one hour or other come with a casting command ; one command that shall have the casting voice ; that if you obey not then, mercy will shut up shop, and trade with you no more, but give you up for ever ; and therefore I say now if you would not loose any opportunity, take every opportunity.

And now give my discourse leave to cast some beams of reflection upon that worthy Gentleman whom God hath taken from us : 'Tis our duty to speak something of him : Though we bury his body, yet 'tis not fit we should bury his worth in a grave of silence and oblivion, and truly (my beloved) I doe not thinke yee can bury the sweet remembrance of him ; Hee will live a long time after his death, though he be dead, yet he cannot dye, his name cannot expire so soon : Oh ! that what good was in him might live after him to give us example :

Hee

Hee was an exemplary patterne; when hee's laid in this grave hee'l live above the grave, the sweet smelling spices of his lovely life and conversation will imbalm him, and keep him unperisht in your thoughts many years. I need not blazon his coat of arms (you may see them upon the sable hearse) the worth of his descent or lustre of his family, *Et genus & proavos & quæ not fecimus ipsi*; you did all honour him and know him, Mr. *Walcot* of *Walcot* : besides that he was honored with the office of Justice of Peace in his Country, & truly I thinke the office in some measure received honour from him, for he adorned it with his vertues : he moved in that sphear for many years together, in which place both he and that worthy Gentleman, now with the Lord, M. *Rich. More* of *Linley* Esq. (whom for honors sake I cannot but revive and mention) In which place I say (you all know) how they two uniting their beames together, refreshed your countrey with the warmth of their influence; executing Justice, relieving the poor, placing Orphans, punishing offenders, suppressing the prophanation of Sabbaths, countenancing the godly, supporting the course of godlinesse and religion, honoring and backing the faithfull Ministers of God. I well remember those times, I speak but what yee all know.

And once
a Member
of the Par-
liament.

He was also (having interest in so many Churches) as great an instrument (I think) as any in the Countrey, to propagate the Gospel, and preaching of the word.

That excellent man of God Mr. *Pierston* of *Brompton Bryan* had a large room in this Gentlemans heart, and kindled that pious flame in him : and when M. *Pierston* dyed, this flame dyed not in this Gentlemans breast, till the oyle of his life wasted; surely 'twas a true worke, it lasted in him.

It was his care to get as godly Ministers, and able as he could; and how dear were his Ministers to him? I dare say, next to his wife and children, First, he was a father to them : they were to oversee the flock, and truly he would over-see them that they should want nothing according to his ability. When they came to visit him, his common quære was, Is it comfortable with you? do you want? tell me if you doe, let me know it? I would not have you discouraged, nor goe on drooping in Gods work. I speak but truth themselves are witnesses.

He was a mirrour and example of temperance to all the Gentry in the countrey.

I know no greater infirmity did lye upon him then timorousnes, he had not that height of masculine spirit web dwelt in some men:

But my beloved, he that is without sin among you let him cast the first stone.

He was as meek as a Lamb : a child might reprove him; an inferiour might boldly tell him where (he thought) he went awry. I never found any like him in this, he would ever love a man for it.

As for Covetousnes, I dare say he was not much acquainted with it; for 1 when he had an opportunity to exercise covetousnesse in the disposure of the Vicarage of *Glun*, he gave it me as freely as the Sun shines upon me in the day time; he was no mercenary Patron. 2 Covetousnes and mercy never dwell together; a covetous man cannot be a mercifull man; but he was a man made up of pity and mercy to the poor; I speak but what you all know; the bellies of the hungry, and the backs of the naked did every yeare proclaim his bounty and charity. 3 Besides a covetous liver is no free giver in secret : a covetous man, when he gives, will cause his gifts to run in a visible channel to be seen of men; but (to my knowledge) he was a secret and hidden reliever of godly widdows and others that were in want; he refresh't their bowels with his hid treasures; he would send to know their indigencies and their straits; they need not send to him, he would send to them. 4 Yet more, a covetous man is not a cheerfull man under losses : but he was sweet and smiling under all his losses. 'Tis well knowne, these times frown'd upon him, and made him a great looser, yet he had a most composed and contented heart under them, with a great deal of acquiescence in God. 5 Besides, no man knew the dimensions of his estate better then himself, so that knowing what I now do know, I admire at his constant liberality.

He was of a meek spirit, wonderful free from the tang of revenge; I know no man had such a rare art of forgiving injuries as he had: if any had spoke ill of him, or done ill to him, he would be silent, & passe it by with this, *They are but men, they shew themselves to be men.*

He was a pattern of patience under affliction; Surely there was much worth in this Gentleman, your faces speak such sadnesse for his losse and departure; Methinks I read a sad love-- and loving sadnesse written upon your faces for him.

It may be some may think, that in setting out his graces and his works, that I place some merit in these things : No, I doe not, and therefore let me tell you, that when he was like to dye before, (for now God took him suddenly) he uttered this speech, when he saw his dear wife and servants weeping before him; *Why doe yee weep thus? cannot a man dye without all this adoe?* and sayth hee, *I doe rely wholly upon the righteousnesse of Jesus Christ;* and recovering that time; he did renounce all his own works that ever he had done, desiring to be accepted in Christ.

And thus I have done speaking of him, and so speaking longer to you; only I would entreat you to pray for his family: He hath been an instrument of good unto the countrey, and now he is gone, pray for his Family, pray good on his Family; that much good may still come out of that Family.

And what shall we say of our selves? what shall I say to you? I say againe, as I did before, Loose not your opportunities: shall we suffer the time to condemne us, that was given to save us? we must either be saved in it, or condemned in it: ah then! let us time our businesse aright for heaven: you that have no grace, get it: I say, get it; you that have any grace, use it for God, and increase it: use your grace to Gods glory: act more grace, and get more grace. It is a sad signe when men doe not go on in grace; the righteousness of God (saith Paul) is revealed from faith to faith; That is, they which have faith, shall have more faith: therefore this is a fearfull signe that we have no faith nor grace, if God doth not increase our faith and grace in us.

Rom. 1. 17

Again, If men will sleep and doe no good, God comes and takes away their gifts: *Take his Talent from him* (saith Christ) *from the unprofitable servant*, in *Act. 26. 18.* You have God opening eyes, in *Isa. 6. 10.* you have God shutting eyes, in *Job. 15. 1.* you have God dressing trees, in *Mat. 3. 10.* you have God hewing down trees, and in *Mat. 21.* there you have him cursing the tree, *Never fruit grow on thee hereafter*: If thou neglect prayer God will take away the gift of prayer; if you will not exercise repentance, God will take away repentance it selfe from thee; thy graces shall drop away one after another, and ane vertue dye after another, untill the Soul dye too. Thus doth God smite the unprofitable servant, that crumbles away his time here, his opportunities here, and acts not for God: *Take away from him, even that which he hath*; and then as the figtree began to wither, so doe his gifts begin to flag and paire in him; as if a worme were still gnawing at them, his knowledge looseth its relish, like a dying mans palate; his judgement in him rusts like a sword that is not used: His Faith withereth as if it were blasted, & the Image of death is upon all his profession; he thinks (like *Sampson*) to pray as he did, & speak as he did; he shakes himself to duty as at other times, but his strength is gone from him. Wo to the Soul of such a one; Soul-losses, and Soul-Judgements are the worst.

Mat. 25.
28.

Verse 29.

In one word, Sinners, wing your hast, delay not, but home to God: your opportunities are flying, fly you as fast home to God: let me argue the case with you as *Abraham* did with God, peradventure (saith he) there be 50 righteous in *Sodom*, peradventure 20,
perad-

peradventure but 10, and wilt thou not spare it for these? as *Abraham* reckoned up the righteous that might have bin in *Sodom*, so gite me leave to number your days; it may be thou hast 20 years yet to live, and wilt thou not serve God 20 years for a Crown of glory? 20 years service is too little for so great a Crown of glory: when thou com'st to dye, thou would'st be saved for ever, and wilt thou not serve out 20 years to be saved an eternity? It may be thou hast but 10 years yet to live, and wilt thou not serve God 10 years, who hast served a lust twice 10? It may be thou hast but 7 years yet to live, an apprentice serves out 7 years for a trade, and wilt thou not serve 7 years for an heaven? *Jacob* served twice 7 for *Rachel*, and wilt thou not serve one 7 for Christ? It may be there are but five cards in all left in the deck, but 5 years yet to live, nay, it may be but 5 months, nay, it may be but five weeks, nay it may be but five days, nay, it may be but five hours, as soon as you are come home from burying the dead, you (it may be) may return your selves to be buried, ah then! is it not time for you to make hast? you that have no grace, yet a little while, and you may loose heaven, (and is it not time then for you to make hast?) and you that have grace, yet a little while and you may arrive at heaven (and is it not time also for you to make hast?) up then and be doing: you Saints, I say, up and be doing, it may be your worke is almost at an end; be not weary, pluck up your spirits; he which is tyred can crawl a little way; a little farther put on, a little farther yet, one step more for a Kingdom.

Lastly, I would charge every one of you that have heard me this day, not to gather from any thing I have said, that his opportunitie is past: forme up no such conclusion: I doe not, I dare not say to the vilest sinner, that his opportunitie is past: Though thine opportunitie be passing away, yet I doe not say it is past away: this Sermon is not to shut any Sinner out of Heaven, but to hasten him towards heaven: because you have lost so many opportunities, I would hasten you to come in to Christ, whilst there are any yet left: because opportunities may be lost, I would quicken you to come in, before all are gone: Sinner, yet take Christ, and God will yet receive thee; repent now, and God will save thee now. Say not, thy opportunity is gone, for God calls thee, linger and delay no longer; because opportunity will be gone.